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ISSN 1753-121-7



■ BY ANNA WHITE

METAL thieves stripped bundles of lead piping from a children's nursery – causing more than £3,000 worth of damage.

The offenders targeted Pennies Day Nursery, in Hockers Lane, Detling, between Friday, December 4 and the morning of Monday 7.

They clambered onto a section of the building's roof before ripping out the leadwork.

The thieves made off with £100 of the valuable metal – stolen to be sold as scrap.

But the cost to the nursery is much greater as the gaps left in the roof saw water pour into the building during the weekend – causing extensive damage inside. The repair bill currently stands at more than £3,000.

The theft as come as a massive blow to the centre, as workers were putting the finishing touches to a complete refurbishment of the building's facilities.

Manager Trudi Mayes said: "We made immediate arrangements for a temporary repair, but this kind of thoughtless and petty action is annoying when we are doing our best to offer a good service. We will put the damage right, but I think everyone here would be glad if the culprits were caught."

The attack on the nursery follows similar raids on the Women's Institute centre in Bearsted and St Catherine's Church, in Preston Lane, Faversham, which was targeted twice in quick succession.

Mid Kent Police have now urged homeowners to protect their property.

Crime prevention manager John Grant said:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



PARTY WITH JEDWARD

Spike-haired X Factor finalists John and Edward will see in the New Year with their Kent fans at a town centre nightspot.

The Irish twins – dubbed Jedward – will be on stage at Liquid and Envy nightclub on Wednesday, December 30, to entertain the crowds at the UK Club Culture's under-18s New Year's Eve event.

Tickets for Jedward's show at Maidstone cost £15 and can be purchased visit www.ukclubculture.com or on the door. Doors open at 6pm.



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2 KOS Media Business Challenge 2009 double award winner Charity Bank explains its ethical lending. **Search 'Bank'**



3 Gillingham manager Mark Stimson on plans for the weekend game... and Christmas. **Search 'Gillingham'**

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KIG inspectors in site visit as inquiry draws to conclusion

■ BY ANNA WHITE

INSPECTORS will visit the rural site under threat from a proposed giant industrial depot before the long-running inquiry into the plan comes to an end next week.

For ten weeks Andrew Phillipson and Malcolm Rivett have heard evidence and views from each party involved in the controversial Kent International Gateway (KIG) inquiry.

With the end of the inquiry looming, the inspectors are now taking time to see the proposed site for the rail freight interchange, just off junction eight of the M20 at Hollingbourne.

Viewpoints

Mr Phillipson and Mr Rivett will take a tour of the North Downs Way and a planned route of viewpoints – suggested by campaign group STOP-KIG – in the area today (Wednesday) and tomorrow.

They will be joined by Brian Clifford, chairman of the Bearsted and Thurnham Society, Ms Thompson from KIG and Brian Morgan from Maidstone Borough Council.

Campaigners hope the inspectors will note the strong opposition among residents in the neighbouring villages, in the form of posters, banners and signs outside homes.

The application for the 259-acre road-rail interchange has outraged residents, councillors, MPs and organisations opposed to the plan.

KIG successfully bypassed Maidstone council earlier this year to go straight to public inquiry, by

claiming the council had taken too long to reach a decision.

The planning committee was still required to announce what its decision would have been and about 1,000 people turned out in May to hear the committee vote unanimously against KIG.

Protests continued to be held throughout the year until the opening day of what was scheduled to be a nine-week inquiry, in October, which more than 800 residents attended.

Homeowners in the affected villages have continued to show their support for StopKIG and other objecting parties throughout the inquiry and are being encouraged to do so for the closing statements next week.

StopKIG is urging its supporters to show their backing for its leader Richard Ashness on Tuesday, when he makes his final plea to the inspector to reject KIG's application.

Mr Ashness said: "In my opinion, the balance of the evidence has come down clearly in favour of the opponents to KIG and I would be surprised if the decision goes against us. "But who knows? It's down to the judgement of the inspectors."

Timothy Corner QC, for the council, and Christopher Katkaouski, for KIG, will make their closing speeches on Wednesday.

Once the inquiry has finished, Mr Phillipson will make his recommendation on the proposal to Communities Minister John Denham, who will then make the final decision.

yourmaidstone NEWS IN BRIEF

Award nomination for dedicated PDSA team

A TEAM of pet-loving volunteers have been shortlisted for an award for their hard work and commitment.

Fifty workers at Maidstone's PDSA shop in the High Street are in the running to win the charity's Volunteer Team of the Year Award.

The team has been recognised for volunteering to do extra shifts during severe floods which hit the shop between 2008 and 2009.

Manager Lizzy Rogers, who nominated her volunteers, said: "I'm extremely pleased they've been shortlisted and proud to be their manager."

The winners will be announced in the New Year.

Four-year prison term for drunken arsonist

A DRUNKEN arsonist has been sentenced to four years in jail after he put a family's life in danger by starting a fire at their home.

Damien Christie, 23, previously of Fant Road, Maidstone, pleaded guilty at Maidstone Crown Court to committing arson.

The court heard Christie started a fire in a shed next to a house in Tarragon Road, in the early hours of March 8, last year.

A family was sleeping in the house but escaped unhurt after a neighbour raised the alarm. Christie said he had drunk a litre of vodka before starting the fire.

Who is the owner of three candlesticks?

OFFICERS are trying to trace the owner of three candlesticks and chairs confiscated from a suspected thief.

The man, who is from Maidstone, was arrested after he was seen in Cranbrook with the items in his vehicle and has been released on bail while inquiries continue.

The three candlesticks are 2ft to 3ft tall and are almost identical, but each has a slightly different design of candle holder. Call Det Con Lisa Edgington on 01732 379217 or email appeals.westkent@kent.pnn.police.uk

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New Gurkha campaign to repay debt of honour

■ BY ANNA WHITE

JOANNA Lumley has vowed to continue her fight to secure a better life for Gurkha soldiers by raising millions of pounds for those living in poverty.

The actress, dubbed "daughter of Nepal" for her part in the momentous Gurkha Justice Campaign, will launch her latest mission tomorrow (Thursday) - Debt of Honour - which aims to continue helping the soldiers.

The Absolutely Fabulous star and the driving force behind this year's successful Gurkha Justice fight, Peter Carroll, hope to raise £11 million for elderly Gurkha veterans of World War Two, now living in poverty in Nepal.

Ms Lumley and Mr Carroll, who is the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Maidstone, met many of the veterans and their families during their visit to Nepal in July.

The duo were mobbed by well-wishers during their visit, all thankful for their dedication that helped secure all former Gurkha soldiers the right to settle in the UK.

Ms Lumley said: "For almost 200 years the famous fighting men of Nepal have helped fight our wars and keep our peace. Today, 10,000 old Gurkha soldiers and their widows in Nepal face desperate poverty and a very uncertain future.

"They are mostly the old warriors of World War Two who did not serve long enough to earn an Army pension.

"Although increasing numbers of Gurkhas will



FIGHTING TALK: Peter Carroll and Joanna Lumley are focusing on the plight of Nepal's many elderly Gurkhas

settle in the UK, and the Gurkha Welfare Trust is on standby to help, these 10,000 venerable veterans are too old and frail to leave their mountain villages. During our darkest hours, they stand by us. Now we must stand by them."

Mr Carroll said: "The poverty we saw in Nepal was heartbreaking and if people can help us raise the money this Christmas, that would be fantastic.

"This is a different campaign and I'm really looking forward to working with Joanna again."

Most of the 10,000 poverty-stricken veterans

are war wounded and won medals for their bravery, and rely entirely on the trust which the two campaigners are working with on the latest scheme. Money raised will go towards providing monthly welfare pensions, medical care and community aid projects for Gurkha villages.

The actress is especially passionate about the Nepalese soldiers because her father served with the Sixth Gurkha Rifles.

Mr Carroll will join Ms Lumley at the launch tomorrow, at the National Army Museum, in Chelsea, London.

Lead thieves leave behind financial hole

FROM FRONT PAGE

"The reason for the apparent increase in theft of metal can be explained by the inflation of the cost of scrap metal, which has seen a steady rise in recent months.

"We would advise homeowners to prevent becoming a victim of theft by using SmartWater and checking their homes for potential props thieves could use.

"The use of SmartWater is a great deterrent, as offenders see the signs for the DNA marking device and steer clear.

Access

"If caught with the substance on them it links the offender directly to the scene of the crime. Another tip is to remove any objects that can be climbed on to gain access to rooftops.

"Don't make life easy for thieves - it's important you check around buildings and take steps to prevent access to the roof, for example by removing anything you can climb on."

Anyone who witnesses suspicious behaviour or has information about metal thefts should contact police on 01622 690690 or the free and confidential Crimestoppers line on 0800 555111.

Paedophile is jailed after targeting Bewl Water youngsters

A CONVICTED paedophile has been sentenced to 20 months in jail after breaking a sexual offences prevention order banning him from approaching young children.

Kevin Fisher, 50, previously of Waterloo Street, Maidstone, was jailed at Maidstone Crown Court on Monday, December 7, after pleading guilty to breaching the order.

Fisher has a long list of convictions after first being found with indecent images of children in September, 1997.

In May, 2004, Fisher was handed an eight-month sentence after being charged with three counts of making indecent images of children and seven counts of possessing images of children.

He was given an indefinite sexual offences prevention order and made to sign the sexual offenders' register for ten years.



JAILED: Kevin Fisher

He first breached this order in Headcorn in January, 2008, and was given a 20-month suspended sentence. This was enforced after Fisher was caught "interacting" with children under the age of 16 at Bewl Water Sailing Club.

He was also given an additional 16 weeks in prison. Det Sgt Kerry Rothwell said: "I hope this serves as a warning to those who have sexual offences prevention orders imposed upon them. Such orders are put in place to safeguard the public."

"We will work with our partners to ensure these orders are rigorously enforced and robustly investigate any reports of breaches."

"Offenders can expect to face the full weight of any sentence imposed as well as further punitive measures."

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Drink drive suspects snared by patrols in police campaign

THIRTY motorists were arrested in the first two weeks of a campaign to crack down on drink driving in mid Kent.

Patrols have carried out stop checks in Maidstone, Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness since December 1.

Sixteen of the 30 arrests were made in Maidstone. Nine have been charged, two have been bailed and five released with no further action.

PC Warren Jarvis said: "There is no safe drink drive limit. If you are going out, designate a driver who will not drink, or make alternative arrangements to get home, such as a train or taxi. Drink driving could mean losing your car, your job, even your life. It's not worth the risk."

Those now facing charges include Sally Ann Skelton, of Stopford Road, Gillingham. The 43-year-old will appear before Maidstone magistrates on January 5.

Sample

Pamela Crispino, 54, of Beauworth Park, Maidstone, was charged with failing to provide a breath test or sample, as was 36-year-old Sean McGarrigle, of Fairmeadow, Maidstone, who was also driving without insurance or a licence.

Keith Shireby, 51, of Pleasant Valley Lane, East Farleigh, and 41-year-old Alan Bourne, from Ashford, both face separate charges of driving after consuming excess alcohol and failing to stop and report an accident.

Anuzis Audrius, 28, Gentian Close, and 39-year-old Paula Campbell, of Essex Road, both Maidstone, have been charged for driving with excess alcohol.

Trevors Dermot, of Hardy Street, Maidstone, was charged with driving while unfit, as was 50-year-old Jayne Devereux, from Sevenoaks. To report a drink driver, email roads.policing.mid-kent@kent.pnn.police.uk.

Relatives light candles to remember loved ones

HUNDREDS of families came together to remember their loved ones at a ceremony.

Each year bereaved relatives attend The Heart of Kent Hospice's Light up a Light service in Maidstone and West Malling, but this year an extra service was held in the historic grounds of Aylesford Priory.

The new venue proved a great success with more than 1,000 guests lighting a candle in someone's memory on December 6, while raising £15,000 for the hospice.

Five facing charges after fly-tipping crackdown

FIVE illegal waste carriers face prosecution after a crackdown on fly-tipping.

Two motorists were reported to DVLA for not having road tax and one person found with drug paraphernalia faces losing their licence.

More than 50 cars were stopped by teams from the council and police on Tuesday, December 8, and Wednesday, December 9 in Boxley, Bredhurst, Detling, Stockbury, Hollingbourne and the North Downs.

Lib Dem candidate sells off his haulage company

LIBERAL Democrat hopeful Peter Carroll has sold his haulage firm after feeling the full effects of the global recession.

Mr Carroll told Yourmaidstone he feels a weight has been lifted off his shoulders following the sale, which saw his company Seymour Transport merge with a Devon firm. The move has secured his former employees' jobs.

Mr Carroll will continue to work part time for his former company in Larkfield.

Your gifts could make a child happy at Christmas

SHOPPERS and businesses are being urged to help make a child's Christmas extra special by donating gifts.

The Mall Chequers Giving Tree has already collected 102 presents, but more gifts mean more children will have a better festive season. With help from the Maidstone Day Care Centre, all of the gifts will be distributed to youngsters in time for Christmas. Go to www.themall.co.uk or visit the information desk in the centre.

Artists cut a fine figure - out of paper

PAPER-inspired art is often associated with origami, but thousands of visitors to a specialist exhibition will see it can take many other creative forms.

The Cut it Out show, currently at Maidstone Museum, showcases seven contemporary artists, who create one-of-a-kind pieces out of the everyday stationery material.

More than 3,000 art-lovers have already flocked to the exhibition to see the unusual work, created by tearing, ripping and folding paper, and plenty more are expected to go before the show finishes next year.

Cabinet member for leisure and culture, Brian Moss, said: "It is unusual in that everything is based on paper and I'm sure if you came along, you'd be amazed by what can be done with just a piece of paper."

As an exclusive media partner for Cut it Out, during the past month Yourmaidstone has featured five of the seven artists in detail, leaving us with the final two – Oona Patterson and Georgina Russell.

■ BY ANNA WHITE

Some of the work on display demonstrates how paper can be designed to look like a strong structure, but Oona Patterson embraces its delicate nature by creating detailed and extraordinarily small scenes.

The UK-based artist makes the tiny characters and sets to accompany stories she has written to make the books come alive.

Patterson also created a special piece for the Cut it Out exhibition – Digging Words – which features figures no more than two centimetres tall digging into the book they stand on.

Other characters rest beside tiny buckets and spades while book dust and debris scatters across the detailed page.

Georgina Russell's work is created by slashing, cutting and dissecting books, music scores, maps, newspapers and photographs.

In the exhibition, the Scottish artist is showcasing two portrait photographs of her grandparents when they were young.

The photos have been enlarged and Patterson has used a scalpel to cut away, slice



IMAGINATIVE: Just two of the works created out of books by Oona Patterson to make her stories come alive



and etch parts of the paper to leave a delicate web outline of the original photos.

The fragile, lattice-like pieces still show the faces, but the design makes them much more ghostly and captures Patterson's aim of highlighting fading memories.

The work joins creations by artists Chris Kenny, Karen Logan, Henna Nadeem, Ciara Healy and Stefan Saffer.

There is also an installation piece created by hundreds of children at the Big Draw Event, at the Earl Street-based museum.

The Cut it Out exhibition will run until February 7.

VIEW THIS CLIP ON

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Children's centre wins support

YOUNGSTERS enjoyed playing with new toys and games at the opening of a children's centre.

The Greenfields Children's Centre, in Rutland Way, Shepway, was officially opened in front of families and Kent County Council representatives on Thursday, December 10.

The centre, which shares a site with Greenfields Community Primary School, offers a range of services for children and adults, such as childcare, early education, family support and health, as well as information and advice.

Manager Deborah Allcorn said: "I am really passionate about the centre because of what it brings to the community. I wish there had been

something like this for me when I was pregnant."

"We can give parents that much-needed break by looking after the children and also offer the parents adult education."

Mum-of-two Louise Manders, 26, said: "I've got two boys who will be coming here. It's a lovely centre, with lots of toys and things for the kids."

"I think I am going to struggle to get my kids to come home from the centre."

"It's just really nice to have this facility here for the parents and children of the community."

The ribbon was cut by KCC's managing director for children, families and education, Rosalind Turner.

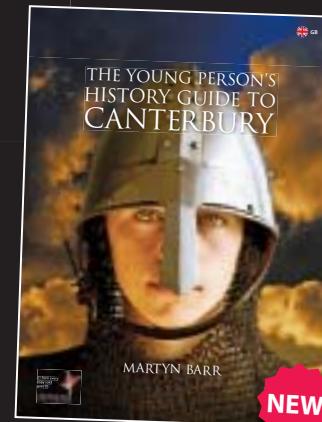


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NEW!



PHOTO CALL: Maidstone actor Christian McKay, right, with Clare Danes, director Richard Linklater, and Zac Efron

Kent actor wins starring role in blockbuster with Zac Efron

AN UNKNOWN actor from Kent is starring in the latest Hollywood blockbuster alongside High School Musical heartthrob Zac Efron.

Christian McKay, from the small village of Wateringbury, near Maidstone, plays the title character in Richard Linklater's *Me and Orson Welles*, with Disney pin-up Efron and Romeo and Juliet actress Clare Danes as his co-stars.

The 36-year-old won the role after impressing Linklater while playing Welles in a one-man show.

The Hollywood director saw the production, *Rosebud: The Lives of Orson Welles*, in New York and asked Christian to bring his portrayal of the role to the big screen.

Christian said he was comfortable playing Welles.

Speaking to a national newspaper about the role, the actor said: "I play him my way, I feel very close to him. You can't play the role without real belief in it."

McKay plays a 22-year-old Welles in the film, which focuses on Welles' 1937 New York stage production of *Julius Caesar*. Efron's character is a student who secures a role in the play and falls for the production assistant, played by Danes.

Due to Efron's past role as the lead male in the three High School Musical films, some

■ BY ANNA WHITE

critics questioned his ability to shake off his stereotype and play a new character, but McKay defended his younger co-star.

He told The Daily Telegraph: "I can't believe people saying he's 'surprisingly' good."

"A journalist made that comment to me and I asked him: 'Have you ever sung in front of an audience? Or acted? Or danced? Zac's doing all three at the same time.'

"He's doing his training in front of the world's media and you say to me, he's 'surprisingly' good!"

The unknown actor also recalled the hysteria that followed Efron while they shot the film on the Isle of Man.

McKay told the national newspaper that one day, in front of the whole crew, he apologised straight-faced to Efron for the screaming girls, saying: "It's a very educated young audience here, you know, Zac."

"They're all just crazy for Orson Welles."

McKay's performance has already scored him a nomination for a British Independent Film Award as most promising newcomer and an Independent Spirit Award for best supporting male.

Maidstone-based McKay told the National Post: "I'm thrilled to be nominated in any category, I think Richard and I'm sure Mr Welles himself would think it was a leading role."

yourmaidstone NEWS IN BRIEF

Need cab? Don't call cops

HAVE you ever called for police assistance and been greeted with a taxi service? Some residents in Maidstone have made the same mistake.

Express Cabs is one of the town's busiest firms and ferries thousands of passengers every week, but sometimes their customers dial a few digits wrong and then wonder why their regular taxi firm is answered by Kent Police.

Express' telephone number is 01622 690000 – two digits different to Kent Police's headquarters number 01622 690690.

A spokeswoman for the police confirmed the office receives on average two calls a week meant for the taxi service in Foster Street, but it is not a cause for concern.

Peter Dolan, manager of Express Cabs, said: "We have had people call for police assistance before, but it doesn't really affect us too much."

Community opens shop

A COMMUNITY shop is open for business after months of hard work and fundraising.

Councillors and families in Chart Sutton officially opened the one-stop shop next to the village green yesterday. The group decided to open a new shop after the old post office closed several years ago.

The Chart Sutton Association raised £12,000 to launch the store by hosting a dinner and asking residents for £25 donations to become bondholders of the shop.

The campaign was led by borough councillor Mike Fitzgerald.

Cancer care on free DVD

BREAST cancer patients will receive information about their treatment in the form of an 18-minute DVD.

The new initiative from Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust aims to allow patients to access the information whenever they wish, rather than having to remember details given to them by a consultant.

Four thousand copies of the disc have been made to give to patients, for free.

Consultant clinical oncologist Dr Russell Burcombe, who helped produce the DVD, said: "This short film tells our patients everything they need to know."

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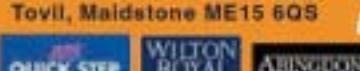


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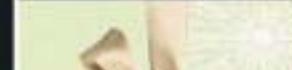
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Full-time fast rail service promises travel revolution

■ BY ED HILL

MONDAY saw the introduction of the full high-speed rail service to London for Kent.

The 140mph Hitachi Javelin trains will all terminate at St Pancras.

To mark the launch on Monday Dame Kelly Holmes travelled Rochester with transport minister Lord Adonis. The Olympic gold medallist has had one of the trains named after her.

Some towns like Ashford see the new service as vital to their economic and growth plans. The new service means commuters can travel to the capital in 37 minutes from the town. Recent improvements have been made to the

station in time for launch and the trains will be serviced at a new depot built in the town.

Ashford council leader Paul Clokie said: "I am glad that this day has finally arrived. This means we will be able to take Ashford forward to new heights."

However, some towns have lost out in the timetable shake up. Maidstone commuters will now only be able to travel to London Victoria using the old mainline services.

The high-speed service also comes at a price with commuters having to pay a premium. For example, a peak time return from Ashford will cost £48.70, about eight pounds more than the standard fare.

But the new timetable will mean an extra 200 trains will be running across the region and capacity will increase by five per cent.

Transport Secretary, Andrew Adonis said:



ON TRACK: The full high-speed timetable is now in operation, bringing a long-promised revolution in transport to the county and – it is hoped – many economic benefits in its slipstream

"These fantastic new services, made possible by the Government's investment in this £5.8bn high speed new line, are changing the

transport map of Kent. Journey times have shrunk dramatically, bringing regeneration and new opportunities for investment."

Bullet trains to shake up the timetable

KENT stations will benefit from between three and 12 morning rush-hour services with the arrival of High Speed 1.

The introduction of the 140mph bullet trains has contributed to one of the biggest timetable shake-ups in more than 40 years, with more than 150 stops scheduled every day between 7am and 10am.

As one of the service's main hubs, Ebbsfleet will receive 12 trains during that period while there will be six at each of Medway's five stations as well as at Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Faversham, Margate and Broadstairs.

The new Southeastern timetable – which includes normal mainline services – will provide passengers with more than 200 extra trains per day and boost capacity by five per cent.

However, HS1 fares will increase by about £8 per journey to pay for the technology, adding about £730 to annual season ticket prices. For example, a return ticket from Ashford on HS1 will cost £48.70 compared with £40.60



SITTING COMFORTABLY: Inside the Javelin train; the route and, right, a bullet train and regular Southeastern service side by side

on the mainline, and an annual season ticket will cost £4,536 compared with £3,780. Regular commuters are being advised to visit www.southeasternrailway.co.uk to see how the changes affect them.

Managing director Charles Horton said: "We've worked hard over the years with stakeholders to be able to get to this point and this new timetable is very important for Kent.

"It will provide more choice for

passengers, see the full introduction of high-speed services and help us continue to improve performance levels.

"The majority of passengers will see an improvement in services, but as with all timetables compromises have had to be made and not everyone will be satisfied. However, once we've introduced the timetable we will monitor services closely and work with the Department for Transport to

make any adjustments which are necessary."

Ramsgate, Canterbury West, Ashford, Dover and the two Folkestone stations will each receive five morning rush-hour services per day, while there will be three at Whitstable, Herne Bay and Birchington. Maidstone has been left off the high-speed map altogether, but KCC has revealed plans to build a new station in the county town and link it to HS1.

Hitachi Class 395 train

- Maximum speed – 140mph on HS1; 100mph on standard lines
- Weight – 268.5 tonnes
- Length – 121.3m (398ft)
- Width – 2.81m (9ft 2in)
- Height – 3.81m (12ft 6in)
- Seats per train – 338
- Capacity (including standing) – 508
- Built from aluminium for lightness and strength
- CCTV in each carriage

High-speed timeline

- December 18, 1996 – Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act passed in Parliament
- September 28, 2003 – Section one of rail link opens between Channel Tunnel and Fawkham Junction, north Kent
- November 14, 2006 – brand name High Speed 1 adopted by London and Continental Railways
- September 4, 2007 – Eurostar runs its first train on HS1 between Paris and St Pancras, in record journey time of 2hr 3min
- October 2, 2007 – Hitachi opens £52m bullet train depot in Ashford
- November 14, 2007 – Section two of rail link opens between Ebbsfleet and St Pancras
- June 29, 2009 – Southeastern launches domestic trial service between Ashford and St Pancras
- September 7, 2009 – Domestic trials expanded to Ramsgate, Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone
- December 13, 2009 – Southeastern launches full domestic HS1 timetable

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QUESTION & ANSWER

SAMANTHA SCOTT



Q & A

The head of fundraising at the Caldecott Foundation talks to **Anna White** about the charity's inspirational work with children across Kent and how she copes with their heartbreak stories.

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Q What's your background?

A I've worked in fundraising and marketing most of my life. Before I moved to Kent in 2004 I worked at national charity KIDS and spent 10 years in theatre, looking after high-level supporters at the National Theatre and creating new audiences at the National and at New Peckham Varieties in South London. I also worked in the music industry. I worked on the management of performers including US R&B legend Jocelyn Brown, and Charlotte Church. This gave me the opportunity to travel to some amazing places around the world. I also ran a theatre company in my spare time with a group of friends called 'Five Go... Theatre Co'.

Q What made you leave the music industry and return to charity work?

A I've always come back to working at charities because it's so rewarding to be helping children who've had a rough start gain the confidence and skills they need to make the most of their life. The injustice of being born into difficult circumstances frustrates me and I feel it's really important to even things out as best possible in whatever way we can. It's so easy to dismiss 'horrible kids' before you understand where they're coming from and how little they've been offered so far. I love it when they find something they're good at and you see their light switch on. Suddenly they have a passion and something they want to do with their life.

Q What is role at the Caldecott Foundation?

A My job is head of fundraising. We have a tiny fundraising team. We do our best to generate grants and donations to make life better for the Caldecott children and develop the organisation. I spend my time writing applications to charitable trusts, liaising with local companies and business supporters, managing fundraising events, compiling newsletters for supporters and getting to know the children here whenever possible by visiting our school and residential homes.

Q What future fundraising ideas have you got planned?

A In 2009 we've been working on a new initiative to raise the profile of Caldecott and recruit new supporters. We've been working with Whitstable marketing company Insight Bridge and advertising students from Canterbury Christchurch to create our first awareness campaign, called Stop the Rain. We're also asking businesses to help us by joining our new Corporate Membership Scheme. In the New Year we'll be asking Kent schools to support us by signing up for our Create a Giant Sunshine' competition.

Q What are the best bits about your job?

A The successes. A success for me can be seeing a child I know who has had a very hard

time, turn things around and find their mojo. A success can also be a positive response to a difficult funding application, or a fantastic event, which raises enough to do something really special for the children.

Q What are the negative parts?

A The worst aspects are the rejections and the feeling of trying to climb a very big mountain wearing flip-flops! The biggest challenge at Caldecott is creating awareness. The Foundation has been around for almost 100 years but has never looked for a high profile, as its work is obviously very sensitive, so it needs funding and support from the community. The other difficult aspect is dealing with the stories you hear about what has happened to the children here. I don't think you ever get used to it and it is constantly heartbreak. As a result of their experiences, the children have difficult emotions to cope with. This must be very hardgoing for the care and school staff who do the most amazing job. You see how much the kids love them for it. Christmas and not having a family to be with must be horrifically painful for any child, I can't imagine.

Q How people find out more about the Caldecott Foundation?

A I can be emailed at samantha.scott@caldecottfoundation.co.uk and people can visit www.caldecottfoundation.co.uk.

CROSSKEYS COACHES

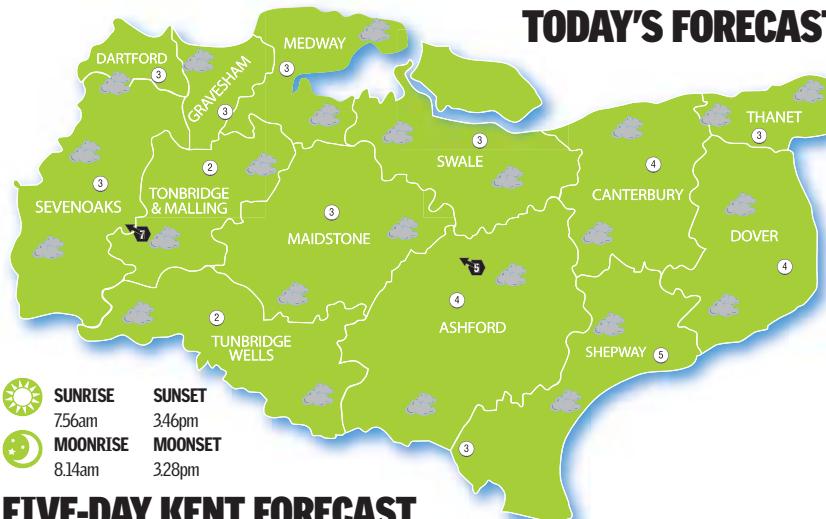
DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

January		
Friday 8th	Westfield Shopping Centre	£14.00
Saturday 9th	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
Sunday 17th	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
Wednesday 20th	Maidstone & Newham Court Shopping Village	£7.50
Saturday 23rd	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
February		
Monday 1st	Afternoon Cite Europe	£14.00
Thursday 4th	Ikea & Lakeside	£16.50
Saturday 6th	De Panne	£19.50
Monday 15th	Dickens World	£16.00
Thursday 18th	Boulogne & Nausicaa	£25.00
Saturday 20th	Disneyland, Paris	£67.50
Wednesday 24th	Brick Lane Music Hall	£37.50
March		
Monday 1st	Afternoon Cite Europe	£14.00
Sunday 7th	London Eye & Thames Cruise	£37.50
Tuesday 9th	Westfield Shopping Centre	£17.00
Thursday 11th	Kensington Palace	£25.00
Saturday 13th	De Panne	£19.50
Friday 19th	The Stitch & Craft Show 2010 at Olympia	£22.00
Sunday 21st	Yesterdays World & Battle Abbey	£16.50
Wednesday 24th	Ideal Home Exhibition	£28.00
Thursday 25th	Boulogne	£24.00
Saturday 27th	Bruges	£32.00

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FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	4°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C	Gravesend	4°C	3°C	4°C
Canterbury	3°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C	Maidstone	4°C	3°C	4°C
Chatham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Ramsgate	3°C	3°C	4°C
Dartford	4°C	3°C	4°C	4°C	4°C	Rochester	4°C	4°C	5°C
Dover	3°C	4°C	5°C	3°C	4°C	Sevenoaks	3°C	2°C	3°C
Faversham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Sittingbourne	4°C	4°C	5°C
Folkestone	3°C	4°C	5°C	3°C	4°C	Tonbridge	4°C	3°C	4°C
Gillingham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Tun Wells	4°C	3°C	4°C

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WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	2:25pm	5.7m
	Sunday	3:00pm	5.6m
Dover	Saturday	12:37pm	6.2m
	Sunday	1:12pm	6.1m
Dungeness	Saturday	12:32pm	7.1m
	Sunday	1:07pm	7.0m
Ramsgate	Saturday	1:07pm	4.8m
	Sunday	1:42pm	4.7m
Sheerness	Saturday	2:15pm	5.5m
	Sunday	2:50pm	5.4m
Whitstable	Saturday	2:24pm	5.0m
	Sunday	2:56pm	4.9m



ENTREPRENEUR: James Caan will talk at Kent conference

Dragon star James Caan will share his expertise

DRAGONS Den mogul James Caan will swoop into Kent next year to speak at the county's largest business conference.

The multi-millionaire will share his experience and top tips at Business Link's Kent 2020 Vision event.

Caan, who is the newest dragon on BBC's hit investment show, will speak about his first inroads into the business world and how he grew his first recruitment company into a £130 million business.

Business Link's event manager Carol Black said: "Having someone as successful as James Caan as our speaker is very exciting as he really is an inspirational figure in terms of his business achievements.

"Would-be entrepreneurs should make the most of this fantastic opportunity."

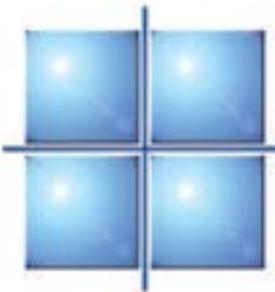
The Kent 2020 Vision event, held at the Kent Showground, just off the A249 Detling Hill, attracts thousands of companies and entrepreneurs each year – all hoping to achieve success like Caan.

Next year's show takes place on Thursday, April 22, from 8am to 5pm.



AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	-2°C	Madrid	6°C
Athens	14°C	New York	4°C
Barcelona	7°C	Paris	1°C
Beijing	1°C	Rome	9°C
Bombay	32°C	Sydney	21°C
Cape Town	31°C	Tenerife	23°C
Cardiff	6°C	Tokyo	10°C
Gibraltar	10°C	Vancouver	0°C
Hong Kong	22°C	Warsaw	-2°C
Las Palmas	23°C	Wellington	19°C



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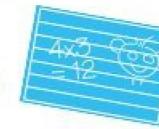
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BREAK TIME

Outdoors builds pupils' confidence

TWO groups of schoolchildren spent three days experiencing the great outdoors, learning new skills and sports.

The year seven teams from the New Line Learning Academy, in Boughton Monchelsea, took part in team-building exercises at the Carrot Wood activity centre, in Tonbridge.



Headteacher Guy Hewett said: "I was really proud of the kids."

"They were positive, well-behaved and were clearly enjoying the whole experience."

"Also the commitment of our staff is why the academy is succeeding."

Widdecombe gives alumni certificates

UNIVERSITY students have returned to their former school to accept their A-Level certificates from Maidstone and Weald MP Ann Widdecombe.

Past Invicta Grammar School students arrived at the school in Hubbards Lane yesterday to celebrate their achievements with the staff and fellow pupils at the special ceremony.

Ms Widdecombe also presented GCSE certificates to those now studying their A Levels at the school.

Invicta Grammar this year celebrated its best ever A-Level results.

Students work to beat the bullies at awareness event

■ BY ANNA WHITE

HUNDREDS of youngsters have been rewarded for their efforts to make their school safer and bully-free.

Pupils and staff from 28 schools across Maidstone completed 17 tasks to show their commitment to preventing and tackling bullying as part of a national awareness week.

The challenges included implementing an anti-bullying policy, training staff to tackle the problem and having measures in place for anyone to report bullying.

The successful schools earned themselves the Safe Schools Safe Partnership Accreditation award, from Kent County Council, which is one of only a few to run an anti-bullying award programme.

During a day of celebration at Maidstone town hall, the pupils showcased some of the work they did to achieve the recognition and took part in a drama workshop.

Headteacher of Allington Primary School, Mark Geedah said: "We have used storytelling to get the anti-bullying message across."

A group of talented parents and teaching staff got together to create story sacks, and the sacks contain a book, costumes and props to bring the story to life. It helps families interact and enjoy reading."

Ruth Simpson, deputy headteacher of St Simon Stock Catholic School, in Oakwood Park, said: "We have had a peer-mentoring scheme in place for a couple of years.

"Mentors give up their time to help other



SAFER TOGETHER: Nick Moore, Alicja Falkowska, deputy headteacher Ruth Simpson, Julia Szczecowicz and Rachel Hunt from St Simon Stock Catholic School took part in the anti-bullying awareness event at Maidstone town hall

students who might feel they are struggling in or out of school.

"Our mentors challenge bullying and, as a result, it is a much happier and safer school."

KCC's director for children, families and education, Rosalind Turner, said: "Every child I've met has found this experience rewarding and I've been impressed with how committed and passionate they are towards this."

The 28 schools that took part are of the Maidstone 1 Local Children's Service Partnership, including Barming, Boughton Monchelsea, Brunswick House, Coxheath, Ditton, East Farleigh, Hunton, Laddingford St

Mary's, Marden, Palace Wood, St Francis' Catholic, St Margaret's, St Michael's, Staplehurst, Sutton Valence, Wateringbury, West Borough and Yalding St Peter and St Paul's primary and infant schools.

Secondary and grammar schools involved in the event include Astor of Hever, Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Maplesden Noakes and Oakwood Park.

Schools for children with special needs, The Cedars and Bower Grove School, also took part in the scheme.

The event coincided with National Anti-Bullying Week between November 16 and 20.

SEND your schools news and pictures to yourmaidstone@kosmedia.co.uk. You can also upload your video clips of schools events on to www.yourkenttv.co.uk

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care products which work alongside the treatment offered at the clinic.

The clinic is led by a trained cosmetic doctor and similar operations are usually just found in London or in bigger cities.

Other current popular treatments include Botox, Restylane, hair removal, leg vein removal and sculptra while skin refreshment, chemical peel and microdermabrasion are also being eagerly sought.

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Global warming seems to mean more rain, so where's the sense in charging us for water meters supposed to help us save?



I doubt people in Cockermouth think we need to save water

SURELY someone needs a bit of a slap for choosing this week to tell us we are all going to have to pay for water meters in our homes... even though global warming is set to bring more rain.

You could be forgiven for being a bit confused over plans by the Government to cut water use at home with meters costing £200 each.

I'm sure even the people of Cockermouth could find it in themselves to chuckle over the thought we don't have enough rain.

Here in Kent we've 'suffered' more than most with hosepipe bans and alleged shortages for years.

But this week meters were revealed as the way to meet Government consumption targets, down from 148 to 130 litres a day by 2030.

Why bother? Water addicts will shower in service stations, wash their car at filling stations and drink more water at work. It's impossible to monitor individuals. Will we visit

people's homes and they'll tell us not to flush? Will they ask us to 'go' before we visit?

Anyone who has bought a house built in the past ten years will already have a meter and, let's be honest, it's no big deal.

So long as there are houses without them, then water bosses have to charge similar figures for metered and un-metered homes because people talk – though they are not necessarily the sort of people I'd invite around for dinner.

So the meter is not a big concern. But being charged £200 to have it fitted is very wrong.

It is of course another money-making scam to pay for investment in old Victorian infrastructure that has been ignored since privatisation.

And it's being dressed up as encouraging us to 'save water', even though the climate change worriers tell us there's going to be loads more rain across northern Europe.

Civil servant Anna Walker led the new study, which concludes charging you for what is used, will force us all to save.

Nonsense it'll just mean rich folk can bathe

whenever they want to and the poor will be even more smelly.

And it came as no surprise that the Environment Agency agrees.

Its spokesman trotted out the tired line that almost half of us in the UK live in areas where there is less water per person than in Spain or Morocco.

It's a statistic that means nothing but the Environment Agency insists on using it. Spain can expect more rain too if the climate worriers are right, so, the Agency will continue trotting out the same useless phrase.

As the great and good – 15,000 of them – assemble in Copenhagen to talk about global warming, to argue about who's telling the truth and who isn't, and no doubt tie themselves in knots, I don't think anyone will be stupid enough to say water shortages in the UK will be a part of man's destruction of our planet.

Only this Government, forgetful of water company profligacy towards top bosses and shareholders over the past two decades, would dare to suggest that.

GET IN TOUCH...

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TEXT: MAID then your message to: 818000 (please remember to include you name)

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If there is a story in your area you think we should be covering contact the news editor, **Simon Robinson**, on **01303 817185** or email him on the details above. If you want to be the next Maidstone blogger then all you have to do is submit an article to us (of around 550 words) and email it to the news editor. And don't forget, for all the latest news and video from your town log-on to www.yourmaidstone.co.uk.

Write to The Editor, Yourmaidstone, KoS Media, Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR.

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Paul and Julie Martin have been running this elegant little gem in the Boughton countryside just off the A2 for 22 years, but the venue has been satisfying customers since before any of the Martins were even born.

Paul and Julie have always known that the property could have been around since the 15th century, but recently one customer kindly donated this image which shows the restaurant as a tearoom in the 1930s.

"We were so pleased when we were given these pictures," said Julie. "Now we can say that diners get the whole experience

when they join us for dinner – delicious food, fantastic service, and a real taste of vintage Kent."

When you book a table at Martins, you're guaranteed to feel at home – the pride that chef Paul and maitre'd Julie take in their work is evident.

For parties, fussy eaters and lazy Friday nights, the carvery, at £14.50, is the ultimate dining experience.

Make sure you've reserved your table for Christmas Day – call 01227 750304 for more information. And if you haven't yet booked your office Christmas party, get a move on!

From the glamourous melon and strawberry goblets with pink sugar frosting, and Paul's famous roast turkey dinners, you'll be booking for next year before you've finished your melted Mars bar gateau.

Visit us at www.martinsrestaurant.co.uk

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Telephone: 01227 750304.



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Village Hotel

Starter: Hot Rock skewers - 4 skewers of chicken or fillet steak with dipping sauces
Main course: Mussels Marinere and fries, with shallots, garlic, white wine & cream
Dessert: Mature waxed Cheddar or Camembert with grapes and chutney
Telephone: 01622 672200

Prince of Wales

Starter: Oven-baked Camembert with cranberry jelly and toast
Main course: Indian marinated chicken breast with new potatoes and vegetables
Dessert: Traditional spotted dick with custard
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Starter: Thai fish cakes with lime and chilli dip
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yourleisure

He's an old ladies' man

Cornish comedian Jethro knows just how far he can go if he wants to hang on to his audience

JETHRO

Various dates
Various venues



START the New Year with some big belly laughs as Cornish comic Jethro returns to Kent.

Despite only appearing on television a handful of times during his long career, the wag from the West Country has performed live to more than three million people and is familiar to UK comedy fans.

Once the rigours of Christmas are over, give yourself something to look forward to by booking a ticket to see this consummate professional in action.

This hard-working entertainer is continuously on tour and feels the need to work almost incessantly, but his efforts have won him countless fans and an unrelenting demand for tickets to his live shows. But he started out as a carpenter and it was only when the 18-year-old Jethro – whose real name is Jeffrey Rowe – joined the local operatic society that his career in show business began.

Discovering that he could hold a tune, he began to play guitar and sing songs in local pubs. Yet it was a night when his singing voice dried up that Jethro unwittingly stumbled across his vocation.

When he decided to tell a few funny stories instead, the reaction was immediate and the following week he had a large audience, all eager to hear some jokes.

It took many years of working on the club circuit during the 70s and 80s before Jethro finally hit the big time. His hugely successful appearances on the Des O'Connor Tonight show won him legions of fans, including many older people, which is quite surprising given the near-the-knuckle nature of much of his material.

Speaking to KOS Media in 2007, Jethro said he believed his strong following among the older generation was down to his comic judgement.

"There are some things I don't



touch, like religion, because it's not funny and I don't need to," he said.

"There's a line that I don't cross. I'm probably the biggest draw for old ladies in England. I'm too blue really, though they think I'm just acceptable. They're a bit dubious at first, but when they realise I won't go any

further, they love it. It's lovely to see old ladies laugh."

Jethro can be seen at the Assembly Hall in Tunbridge Wells on January 10; the Orchard Theatre in Dartford on February 1; the Central Theatre in Chatham on March 4 and the Leas Cliff Hall in Folkestone on April 26.

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KENT YOUTH WIND ORCHESTRA

Sunday, December 20
Astley Hall, Maidstone



ENJOY Christmas music performed by some of Kent's most talented young musicians this weekend.

The Kent Youth Wind Orchestra is composed of young players aged from 13 to 18, chosen from schools within the county. They are tutored by professional players and tutors, also attending three residential courses during each academic year.

The concert programme will include songs that have remained popular through the

years, such as the enchanting The Snowman. There will be opportunities for the audience to join in the festive songs.

Captain Guy Booth is conductor for the evening, drawing on his experience of conducting a number of youth ensembles. He is currently serving at Kneller Hall and his previous roles include Bandmaster of the Band of the Royal Engineers, along with Director of Music of the Band of the Royal Corps of Signals.

The concert starts at 5pm and tickets cost £8/£5. Call Kent Music on 01622 358402 or email tickets@kent-music.com. To find out more about Kent Music call 01622 691212 or visit www.kent-music.com.

BALLET RUSSES

Tuesday December 22
Odeon, Tunbridge Wells



ESSENTIAL ballet works made famous by the dynamic Ballet Russes company can be seen on the big screen next week.

Formed in 1909, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes was an incredible company at the forefront of dance, music and design.

For 20 years the company thrilled audiences with ground-breaking performances and introduced new global stars of dance, such as Vaslav Nijinsky, Michel Fokine, Leon Bakst and Leonide Massine.

Ballet Russes' performances have inspired CielEcran, Warner Bros Pictures UK and Pathé Productions to mark the company's 100th anniversary with a very special event.

Audiences can see four exceptional ballet works on the silver screen in high definition for a fraction of the cost of a full price ballet ticket. Le Tricorne (1919) combines classicism, modernism and Spanish characteristics, while Le Spectre de la Rose (1911) featured a famous piece of athleticism. The sensual L'après Midi d'un Faune (1912) and Petrouchka (1911) also feature.

The performance starts at 6.30pm. Call 0871 224 4007 or visit www.odeon.co.uk.



ANTFESTIVE

Wednesday December 23
Beacon Court Tavern, Gillingham



KICK off Christmas with a fantastic evening of great music at the fundraising event, Antfestival.

Following their triumphant appearance at Antfest in the summer, the mighty Floors & Walls (pictured) will travel up from Brighton to entertain a Medway crowd once again.

As winners of the Global Battle of the Bands, Floors & Walls are on their way up and fans should not miss this chance to see them in action.

Local band The Startover, from Gravesend, are also heading for big things, having recently signed to Engineer Records. Also on the line-up is new band Superpartyfuntimes, along with Strangeday, Call Off the Search and Calico Street Riots.

All money raised at the



event will go to the Arethusa Centre in Upnor, which provides adventurous outdoor activities for all sorts of people including children in need.

More information about

the centre can be found at www.arethusa.org.uk. Doors open at 7pm and tickets cost £5. For more information about Antfestival go to www.myspace.com/antfest or www.antfest.co.uk.

MAIDSTONE LEISURE

Young actors feature in festive family show

YOUNG actors star in a festive musical at the Exchange Studio in Maidstone.

The Lost Christmas, by Lawrence Mark Wythe, features past and present youth theatre members.

The show opens on Friday and runs until Christmas Eve, with more than one performance each day.

Tickets, from £6.50, at www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk or 01622 758611.

Christmas comes to Camden Road musical

MARK the festive season with a celebration in music and words at the Camden Road the Musical Christmas concert.

Held in aid of the Pickering Cancer Drop-In Centre, the concert takes place at St Barnabas Church in Tunbridge Wells at 7.30pm on Saturday. Light refreshments will be available. Tickets cost £5 from Dave on 07966 190428. Details at www.camdenroad.org.

Enjoy seasonal classics over a pizza dinner

INDULGE in an evening of seasonal favourites with award-winning jazz vocalist, Ian Shaw. From timeless classics such as White Christmas to the upbeat songs of later years, this is a fantastic festive treat.

Tina May will be his guest at the Pizza Express Music Room in Earl Street, Maidstone, at 7pm on Friday. Tickets are £16 from www.pizzaexpresslive.co.uk.

Tribute band re-create Pink Floyd experience

RELIVE the experience of a Pink Floyd concert with Maidstone band Relics.

The band uses lighting, lasers and projections to recreate the authentic Floyd experience. Find out more about them at www.relicstheband.com.

Relics will be at Earls in Earl Street, Maidstone, on Sunday. For more details about the venue call 01622 751286 or visit www.earlsmaidstone.co.uk.

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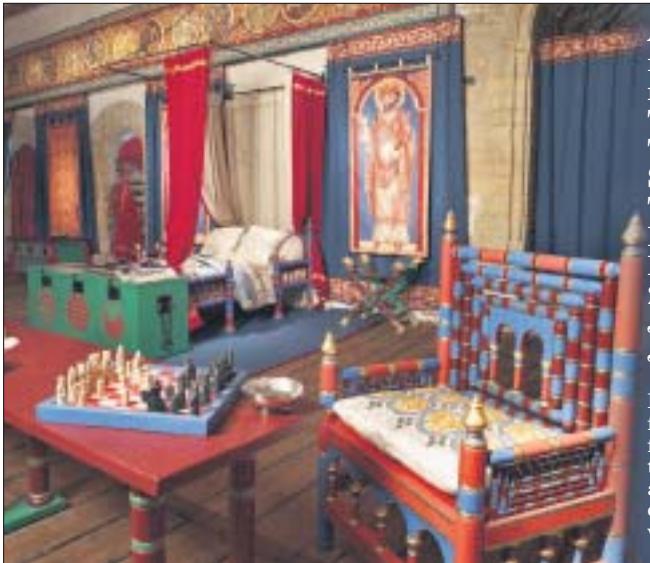
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For information and advice on travelling in Kent and for all our traffic regulation orders, please see the Kent on Saturday or the Kent on Sunday or visit our website at www.kent.gov.uk/highways

yourcompetition

WIN! A royal medieval Christmas family adventure at Dover Castle



A NEW series of festive medieval events are running at Henry II's Great Tower at Dover Castle – The Lord of Misrule this Saturday and Sunday, and Twelfth Knight, Sunday, December 27 and Bank Holiday Monday, December 28 and again Saturday, January 2 until Monday January 4.

To celebrate, we've teamed up with English Heritage to offer SEVEN families a FREE day out at a colourful event just after Christmas. Our top prize winner will get free entry and be treated like royalty with a two course meal served by King Henry II whilst a troubadour entertains them!

This weekend King Henry II's court will turn topsy-turvy during Lord of Misrule – when a visitor is crowned Christmas King to preside over a host of medieval festive revelries.

After Christmas, the king will be recruiting for bold young knights to serve him in Twelfth Knight, when chivalrous boys and girls will undergo knightly training.

Even if you're not a lucky winner you can still take the family along – these colourful events run 10am to 4pm each day.

Find Dover Castle (CT16 1HU) east of Dover town. www.english-heritage.co.uk/dovercastle

TOP PRIZE

- Free family entry (two adults, three children under 16) to the castle to enjoy Twelfth Knight and a two course meal at the castle served by King Henry II!

RUNNER-UP PRIZES

- Six family tickets to the Twelfth Knight event.

To enter, simply answer the question below and send your entry on a postcard along with your email address (if applicable), name, address, and daytime telephone number to Dover Castle Competition, KOS Media, Apple Barn, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR. The closing date is December 21, 2009.

Question: Which king built the Great Tower at Dover Castle?

A. Henry II
 B. Henry VIII
 C. William the Conqueror

All prizes must be taken on Bank Holiday, Monday, December 28.

No purchase necessary. For our full Terms and Conditions please visit www.kentnews.co.uk, or for a posted copy of the T&Cs call 01303 817073. If you do not wish to receive any literature please write 'no literature' on your entry.

Time to get your skates on

Ice Rink & Funfair

The magnificent 600sqm Ice Rink is now open at Bluewater.

So glide over, get into the Christmas spirit and go skating, it's one of the most festive activities of the season.

The rink is undercover this year but don't forget to pack your hat and gloves. Prices start from £5.00 (ticket prices include skate hire)

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 Lines open from Mon to Fri: 9am – 6.30pm Sat & Bank Holidays: 9am - 3.30pm

AT THE BOX OFFICE: Book at one of the box offices at the Winter Wonderland

PLEASE NOTE: The minimum age on the ice rink is 3 years old

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PROPERTY NEWS

Red tape 'likely to put landlords off renting'

LANDLORD Assist is complaining that landlords are likely to be facing more red tape that could increase costs and deter entrants to the private rental market.

According to the tenant arrears and eviction specialist, regulations for social housing landlords are likely to find their way into the private rental sector.

Measures recently announced by the Tenant Services Authority, due to come into force in April, propose a greater emphasis on the relationship between landlords and their tenants at a local level.

The changes aim to encourage tenants to influence and monitor the services they receive and social landlords could face large fines or lose their property management rights for failing to comply.

Housing minister John Healey is hopeful that the legislation will mean repairs are right first time, anti-social behaviour is reduced and tenants have a proper say in the management of their properties.

However Landlord Assist managing director, Graham Kinnear, is concerned that if extended to the private rental sector, the added bureaucracy could deter entrants to the market.

He explained: "Rafts of policy and legislation, which require the landlord to do even more than currently required are, in our view, unnecessary and may well discourage landlords from entering the market, thereby reducing the choice and quality of accommodation available."

Re-mortgaging down in buy-to-let market

THE number of people choosing to remortgage their buy-to-let property is at a two-year low, according to figures.

Paragon Mortgages' Financial Adviser Confidence Tracker Index revealed only 39 per cent of home loan activity in the buy-to-let sector was for remortgages in the third quarter of this year.

This is compared to property purchases in the same period, where 48 per cent of landlords took out a mortgage in order to expand their portfolios in preparation for an economic recovery.

John Heron, managing director of Paragon Mortgages, explained why landlords are not remortgaging.

"They can't because of the low number of mortgages available and there is little incentive to do so because the reversion rates when coming off an introductory deal are so attractive," he said.



£2.5m loans help to get empty homes restored

■ BY NICK AMES

NO Use Empty, the initiative helping to bring empty properties in Kent back into use, has approved a further £1 million worth of interest-free loans this month.

A partnership between Kent County Council and district councils, No Use Empty has been combating the ongoing problem of empty housing, issuing £2.5 million worth of interest-free loans to date.

The problem of empty housing is particularly important at a time when the current economic climate makes it very difficult for people to borrow money.

This new batch of loans will benefit boroughs all over the county, some of whom have recently joined the scheme.

In Thanet, several new loans have been awarded, including £175,000 in Cliftonville for a property which was originally part of The Landmark Hotel.

A loan for £135,000 has been awarded to another property in Cliftonville which dates back to the 1800s, and is currently being converted into eight self-contained two-bedroom apartments.

In Ramsgate, two flats at Granville House, a former hotel on Victoria Parade, have been awarded £50,000.

Another property benefiting from the scheme in Ramsgate, to the tune of £25,000, is a two-storey mid-terrace house with a basement dating back to the 1850s.

In Dover, a £50,000 loan has been awarded to Stour Valley Estates Ltd.

The Greyhound Pub, which has been empty since 2007 and is within the conservation



area, is now undergoing redevelopment following planning permission.

And close to the Eastern Docks, £125,000 has been awarded for the redevelopment of a terrace of three houses once known as Cliff Court Hotel.

The properties are on the sea front and date back to 1840. The developer has already been awarded planning permission for 22 flats across all three houses.

The first loan has been awarded in Shepway, for a Victorian house in Folkestone. County Commercial Properties Ltd has been given £50,000 to do up the building.



Rents set to rise as supply drops off

UK RESIDENTIAL property rents are expected to increase in the New Year as the number of homes coming on to the market falls for the first time since January 2008.

According to a new survey, the recent pick-up in the property market seems to have led to drop-off in the number of rental properties, particularly houses, being made available and as a result, surveyor optimism has increased.

Some 22 per cent of surveyors now expect rents to rise rather than fall in the next three months, says the latest RICS Lettings Survey.

The drop-off in supply is the main driver for the more positive sentiment, with new instructions reaching their lowest level since the survey began in 1998.

Only four per cent of chartered surveyors are still reporting falling rather than rising rents, indicating the downward pressure on rents is already starting to ease.

Significantly, London and the North are already seeing the majority of surveyors reporting price rises over the past three months.

Demand for rental property is still rising, as 16 per cent more surveyors saw activity pick up over the past three months, with demand for houses particularly strong in London.

"It seems the current upward trend in the housing market is having a significant effect on the lettings market, with many of the accidental landlords returning to the sales market

to take advantage of the recent price increases," said RICS spokesman Jeremy Leaf.

"As a result the recent oversupply is reversing, with new instructions at the lowest levels we have ever seen.

"This of course is impacting on prices, and tenants no longer have as strong a bargaining power as they did," he added.

The report's findings are echoed by a survey from Rightmove, the UK's number one property website for lettings, that shows more than a third of people who will rent a property over the next 12 months expect prices in the rental market to increase.

Just seven per cent of renters think that prices will fall.

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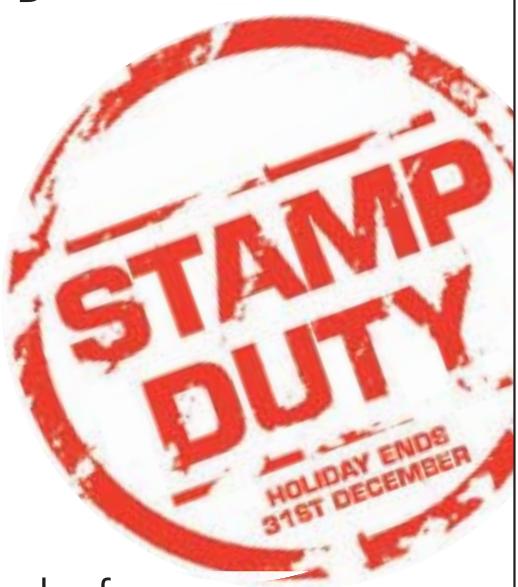
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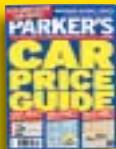
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GOLD: Natalie Gray helped the Great Britain under-23 team to European Cross Country glory on her debut

CROSS-COUNTRY

Natalie helps team get gold in Dublin

NATALIE Gray starred on her Great Britain debut as she helped the under-23 team to a gold medal at the European Cross Country Championships.

The Medway & Maidstone runner was a surprise call-up to the Great Britain team for the championship in Dublin, but she made the most of her opportunity by finishing in the top-20.

The 21-year-old from Bearsted earned her place in the team by finishing fourth in the GB team's European trials in Liverpool last month. Despite Sunday's event being the biggest of her career, she was unfazed by competing against some of the best young runners in Europe.

The Great Britain team romped to the team gold medal for the fourth consecutive year, with all six athletes finishing in the top-20. Gray crossed the line in a creditable 18th out of 59 finishers.

The strong performance in Dublin may not only keep her in the international frame, but attract sponsors to achieve her ambition of becoming a professional athlete.

He said: "Ideally I would love to stay in the Great Britain team for the next international event. I have gone up a lot of steps in a short space of time. My target this season was to do well at the South of England Championship, but I have gone two steps better than that, which has come as a shock. I just hope I can keep running as well as I have been this winter."

PLEASE SEND YOUR SPORTS STORIES TO SPORTS EDITOR GLENN PEARSON AT
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HOME FOR NOW: Paul Bowden-Brown (inset) is adamant Maidstone United will continue to play at Ashford Town's Homelands pitch, despite claims of a contractual dispute

Stones chief in move to avoid groundshare row

MAIDSTONE United chairman Paul Bowden-Brown insists the club will remain playing at Homelands this season despite a disagreement with landlords Ashford Town.

The Stones, who had been playing at Sittingbourne's Bourne Park for seven years, agreed a three-year groundshare deal with Ryman South side Ashford Town during the summer.

However, on Saturday Ashford Town co-owner Tony Betteridge released an ambiguous statement via the club's website, highlighting an outstanding issue between the two clubs.

The statement read: "Maidstone are willing and able to fulfil their contractual obligations, however Ashford Town Football Club also have

FOOTBALL

■ BY TOM HOWARD

contractual obligations to Maidstone and because our club has not fulfilled those obligations we are where we are.

"The key to unlocking this deadlock is in the hands of the management of Ashford Town Football Club and can be dealt with immediately."

Bowden-Brown has responded to the statement and is adamant the club have nothing to worry about and will continue to play their games at Homelands this season.

He said: "There is an internal issue between both clubs, which I cannot go into, but I fully expect it to be resolved. Ashford co-owner Tony Betteridge has put the statement up on the

website to clear up all the rumours of the club being locked out of the ground for various reasons, which have been spreading through the internet forums."

A late downpour on Saturday forced the club's eagerly-anticipated FA Trophy first round clash against Histon to be postponed, which frustrated the Stones chairman.

He said: "It was massively disappointing that the game could not go ahead, not just for Histon, but for our supporters too. We had been in contact with the playing staff and the pitch was playable until 9.30am when it poured down. Unfortunately we were unable to get a pitch inspection and could only get an inspection once the referee arrived which was too late. It was frustrating considering the pitch was probably playable after 3pm."

The re-arranged game was due to take place last night. Log on to www.yourmaidstone.co.uk for a full report.



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Dover outsmart troubled Maidstone at the Mote

RUGBY

■ BY TREVOR LANGLEY

Maidstone 14

Dover 39

MAIDSTONE slipped to their 13th defeat in 14 games as they were out-thought by an intelligent Dover side at the Mote on Saturday.

A late try from Steve Matthews gave the scoreline some respectability, but the disparity between second-placed Dover and the home side was there for all to see.

It left Maidstone eight points adrift of Old Elthamians, third from bottom, in London 1 South and in need of a dramatic change in form in the second-half of the season to avoid a thoroughly disappointing campaign.

In their visit to Dover a 41-0 defeat early in the season, Maidstone came up against a well-drilled side with a formidable back line, marshalled brilliantly by fly-half Martin Beaumont.

To counter this, Maidstone brought John O'Brien and Martin Maytum back into the front row, along with Charlie Simpson into the second row.

Peter Horne moved to his favoured scrum-half position after shaking off a long-standing shoulder injury.

The heavy pitch, after all the recent rain,



SECOND BEST: Maidstone remain in deep trouble in London 1 South after suffering defeat against Dover on Saturday

should have been another factor to inhibit free flowing rugby, but Dover quickly dispelled any thoughts of an easy afternoon for the home side.

Within a minute of the kick-off centre Jamie Townley finished off a move which began in the visitor's half.

In fact, this score epitomised the difference between the sides.

Dover made a hash of receiving the kick-off, but from a position of weakness, they swiftly turned defence into attack and a deftly positioned kick by Beaumont found space behind the Maidstone line and Townley reacted quicker than the defence.

A second Dover score on ten minutes and a penalty shortly afterwards extended the lead

to 15-0, raising the prospects of a heavy defeat for the hosts.

But Maidstone responded and from the restart began a move which finished with the award of a penalty try, duly converted. It led to a good spell for the side but ten minutes before the break Dover scored a third try to lead 20-7.

The second-half started with Maidstone in the ascendancy, but Dover's sharper minds proved the difference as they ran in three tries to make sure of victory.

Matthews powered over at the death, converted by Horne, to haul the hosts into double figures.

Maidstone visit Tunbridge Wells this Saturday in their final game before the three-week Christmas break.

Picture BOB HAYTON

HOCKEY



SEASON'S BEST: Maidstone ladies (right) closed the gap in the title race after beating Dereham

Skipper Thompson leads from the front

Maidstone 2 Dereham 1

MAIDSTONE ladies gave their East Women's Premier League title bid a shot in the arm by beating unbeaten league leaders Dereham.

Rachel Thompson's side started the game slowly and found themselves behind in the first minute after giving away a penalty from a defensive mistake and the Norfolk side produced a clinical finish.

Maidstone responded well and shortly after they restored parity, with a penalty corner strike from captain Thompson.

Dereham started the second-half strongly, determined not to lose their unbeaten record, but with 15 minutes remaining Maidstone were awarded a penalty. Daniels was tripped in the area and Thompson duly converted the penalty, which proved enough to record their best result of the season.

The win means Maidstone stay in fourth position, but the top four teams are separated by just six points.

Success

The ladies were back in action on Sunday and completed a 5-4 Kent Cup quarter-final win against Sevenoaks. Maidstone were 5-0 up at half-time courtesy of strikes from Hannah Durston, Lizzie Daniels and a hat-trick from Kathryn Waldrom.

Sevenoaks fought back and scored four goals in the second-half, but Maidstone held on to move into the semi-finals.

The ladies return to league action on January 16 with a trip to West Herts.

The men's 1st XI also enjoyed success as they secured back-to-back wins for the first time this season, with a 3-2 win against Oxford University.

Maidstone continued where they left off after a morale-boosting win against Tulse Hill and Dulwich last week. Top scorer Chris Bassano-Harper, Kevin Johnson and Ben Harvey managed to find the net, which proved enough to earn victory. They stay in tenth position in South Hockey Premier Division One. With hockey taking a winter break, they return to action on January 16, when they host Brighton & Hove.



Picture MARTIN WATSON

EDGING CLOSER: Aylesford Bulls were denied a first win by a single point at the Jack Williams Ground

Dons heap misery on Bulls

RUGBY

Aylesford Bulls 17 Wimbledon 18

Mid-way through the half Aylesford were awarded a penalty in front of the posts, but instead of kicking for goal they chose to kick for touch, which would prove costly by the final whistle.

The Bulls surged forward in a bid to close the deficit and with ten minutes remaining Matt Baker scored a try, which was converted by Harvey. With one point separating the two teams, the final minutes were frantic, but Aylesford were unable to find a score to win the game.

Bulls face another tricky challenge for their final game of 2009, with a trip to fourth-placed Chichester this Saturday.

LEAGUE TABLE

(before last night's games)

RYMAN PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Dartford	17	14	2	1	+37	44
2 Hastings United	20	10	3	7	+4	33
3 Kingstonian	19	10	2	7	+3	32
4 Tooting & Mitcham U	18	9	3	6	+5	30
5 Canvey Island	18	8	4	6	+5	28
6 Horsham	17	8	3	6	+7	27
7 Ashford Town (Mx)	20	7	6	7	-3	27
8 Sutton United	18	8	2	8	+8	26
9 Harrow Borough	18	7	5	6	+3	26
10 Wealdstone	14	7	5	2	+3	26
11 Tonbridge Angels	19	7	4	8	-1	25
12 Aveley	17	7	3	7	+3	24
13 Boreham Wood	17	7	3	7	+2	24
14 Maidstone United	18	6	5	7	-2	23
15 AFC Hornchurch	18	6	5	7	-2	23
16 Carshalton Athletic	17	6	4	7	-4	22
17 Cray Wanderers	20	6	3	11	-14	21
18 Margate	17	5	4	8	-11	19
19 Hendon	16	5	3	8	-6	18
20 Waltham Abbey	19	4	5	10	-14	17
21 Billericay Town	15	3	6	6	-8	15
22 Bognor Regis Town	18	2	6	10	-15	12

FIXTURES

(Saturday): Ryman Premier Division: Carshalton

Athletic v **Maidstone United**

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Mark Stimson on the value of players doing their homework before games

Picture IGOR KUPCHO

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